

“I do not Have Anything Else, Bra”: The Hardships of Day Labourers in East London, South Africa, and the Implications for Developmental Social Welfare/Work

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Abstract

The social work profession has seen significant changes in approach, with more focus on developmental social welfare in response to structural injustices, poverty, inequality, well-being and development. Day labouring is a global phenomenon and typical of the South African informal sector. This study analyses the hardships of day labourers in East London to reflect on developmental social welfare and its relevance for informal workers in South Africa. A sequential explanatory research design and a mixed-methods approach were adopted. In phase 1 (quantitative), 131 participants were interviewed. In the second phase qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 participants at six different hiring sites. The findings reveal that day labourers work under conditions in which even their basic human rights cannot be guaranteed. Failure to take decisive steps to ensure that their rights are upheld amounts to turning a blind eye to the gross exploitation of one segment of society by another. An inclusive, appreciative and participatory approach is needed to facilitate strategies to integrate informal workers such as day labourers into initiatives that are designed to grant social justice to groups who continue to be marginalised and to live in abject poverty more than two decades after the official demise of apartheid.

Keywords: day labourers, unemployment, hardships, lived experiences, coping strategies

Introduction and Aim

Social work in South Africa has taken bold steps since 1997, in the form of the White Paper for Social Welfare to move out of the Eurocentric, micro-focused, discriminatory and human rights abusive policies and practices towards a developmental approach to welfare. The overall objective of this shift in approach and policy is to enhance the well-being of people within their individual contexts, adopting social investment strategies that build on people's capabilities to lead fulfilling lives (Lombard 2019; Midgley 2010; Patel 2015; Taylor 2018). This transformation, according to Gray et al. (2017), Lombard (2019) and Taylor (2018), was informed by the social development approach of the United Nations World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and the realisation that South Africa is historically, politically, socially, economically and culturally diverse. Its people and problems therefore need a different approach and pathway to well-being.

South Africa is plagued by structural socio-economic ills such as poverty, injustices, inequalities and unemployment (officially 29.1%) (Statistics South Africa 2019). Lombard (2019, 51), in her analysis of all the definitions of developmental social work (DSW) formulated by people such as Midgley, Gray and Patel (Lombard 2019), came to the conclusion that all the definitions of development social work emphasise the importance of changing "structural injustices, poverty and inequality in particular, and human well-being and development".

DSW further emphasises people's participation in the change process and strength-based social investment strategies. Lombard (2019) further explained that the aim of DSW is to promote human rights and human development and integrate social and economic development – not excluding the other factors such as political and cultural issues. Gray (2006), the DSD (2016) and the NPC (2011) in their respective reflections of DSW's development in South Africa, however, are of the opinion that DSW still has a long way to go to fully implement the concept of DSW. Gray (2006) in particular states that social workers struggle to understand the DSW concept. Causes of poverty, according to Gray (2006), are structural and social workers need to practice with an eye to the structural which includes the social, political, economic and cultural determinants of inequalities. Gray's (2006) other criticism was that despite the DSW human rights agenda, social workers still allow the government to determine their agenda. It is therefore pertinent that social work and social service professionals consistently reflect on the consequences of violations of human rights and (in)accessibility to social, economic and environmental services, resources and opportunities when engaging with their services users (Lombard 2019; Wessels 2017). Taylor (2018, 25) concurs that South Africa needed a "transformative perspective that is more appropriate to the context, relevant and applicable to the lived experiences of people in Africa." In this article we used as an example a group of day labourers to reflect on DSW and its relevance for informal workers in South Africa.

A significant portion of prospective users of social workers' services find themselves in South Africa's informal economy where they often engage in a range of survivalist informal employment or self-employment activities as an alternative to being unemployed. Blaauw, Louw and Schenck (2006, 458) define day labourers as informal workers who gather at hiring sites such as street corners and pavements in front of hardware stores in search of opportunities for casual employment. Their informal status precludes them from being eligible for the benefits and security that are associated with permanent employment (Blaauw et al. 2007; Devereux and Conradie 2017; Theodore et al. 2017). In addition, day labourers' vulnerability is highlighted as they are frequently required to perform dangerous tasks and are subjected to abuse and violence (Blaauw et al. 2007; Schenck, Blaauw, and Matthee 2020).

The aim of this paper is to describe the hardships of day labourers in East London in South Africa's Eastern Cape province. We use the findings to reflect on the implications of the hardships of the day labourers for DWS.

Setting in which the Study was Conducted

The study was conducted in East London, which falls under the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Unemployment in the Eastern Cape, which stands at 48.3 per cent according to the expanded definition, is the highest of the nine provinces in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2019). The municipality has witnessed dramatic inflows of day labourers from rural areas owing to high levels of rural unemployment. It was therefore an ideal setting for this research project.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research adopted a sequential explanatory design. Within the broader research design, a mixed-method approach was followed. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, 5) define the mixed-method approach as a process focusing "... on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies." This study utilised a multiphase approach – a concurrent and/or sequential collection of quantitative and qualitative datasets over multiple phases of a study. The different phases of our study are illustrated in Figure 1 and briefly discussed thereafter.

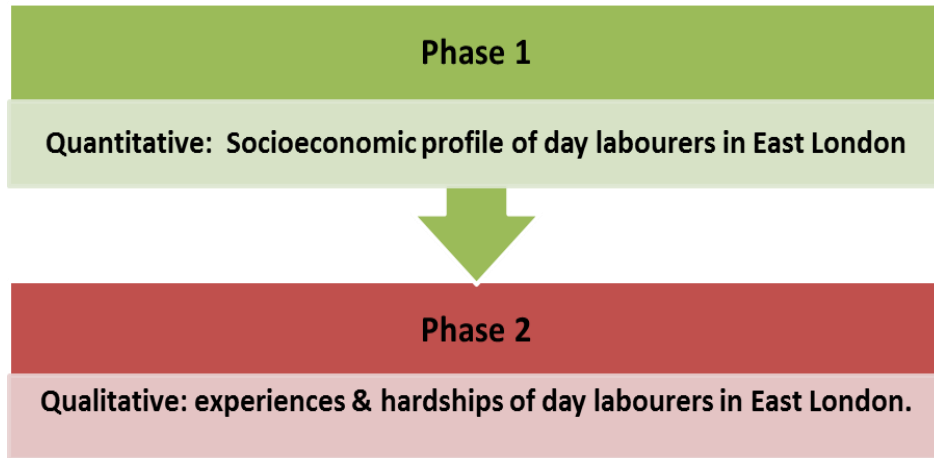


Figure 1: Two-phased mixed-method research used in this study (Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark 2011, 69)

Phase 1 developed a socio-economic profile of day labourers in East London. In this article, the results from the second qualitative phase of the study will be used to investigate the hardships of the day labourers in East London. The sampling procedure and other aspects of the study are briefly highlighted below.

Sampling Procedure and Techniques during each Phase

The first phase of the study was a quantitative study to determine the socio-economic profile of the day labourers in East London. The research population for this study was all of the day labourers who gathered at hiring sites in East London. The researchers revisited all the hiring sites identified in the Blaauw (2010) study to make sure they still existed. A further search was done to identify all the new hiring sites. After all the hiring sites have been identified, availability sampling was used in the first phase of the research project. For the quantitative phase of the study, all of the day labourers over the age of 18 (the prospective participants were asked to confirm their age before the interview commenced) at each hiring site, who were available on the day and willing to be interviewed, formed part of the sample of phase 1 of the study (Ary et al. 2019). In total, 131 day labourers were interviewed during the first phase that was conducted during September 2016. There was one site where a group of women was sitting in order to obtain informal domestic work. They, however, chose not to participate in the research.

The second phase was a qualitative approach study that allows for in-depth exploration and understanding of experiences. Owing to the flexible nature of day labour work (Blaauw 2010) and the movement from one site to the other in search of employment opportunities, participants in the second phase of the study were sampled

using convenience and availability sampling methods during revisits of six of the hiring sites of phase 1. The same criteria as in the first phase were used for selection:

- the day labourers should be over the age of 18; and
- the day labourers should have stood at a site in East London for more than six months.

In the second phase of the study, 18 day labourers were interviewed. This phase of the study highlighted the experiences of the day labourers and the hardships that they encounter in their everyday lives.

The first author interviewed the day labourers as he is fluent in both English and isiXhosa. Each interview lasted around 45 minutes. The qualitative data were collected after the process of collecting the quantitative data had been completed. The second phase of the study (which is qualitative) commenced on 5 December 2017 and was completed a week later, on 12 December 2017. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed according to the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006). During the interviews, care was taken not to detain the participants in order not to jeopardise the likelihood of their finding employment. Trustworthiness in this research was ensured through reaching the objectives of the study without the researchers adding or removing any information, and therefore information used in this study is completely authentic and confirmable.

All reasonable measures were taken to adhere to the ethical code of behaviour that applies to all professional research in the social sciences. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Senate Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. The participants were assured that their participation is strictly voluntary and their privacy would not be compromised in any way. The day labourers were also encouraged not to miss a job opportunity due to the interviews if it arises.

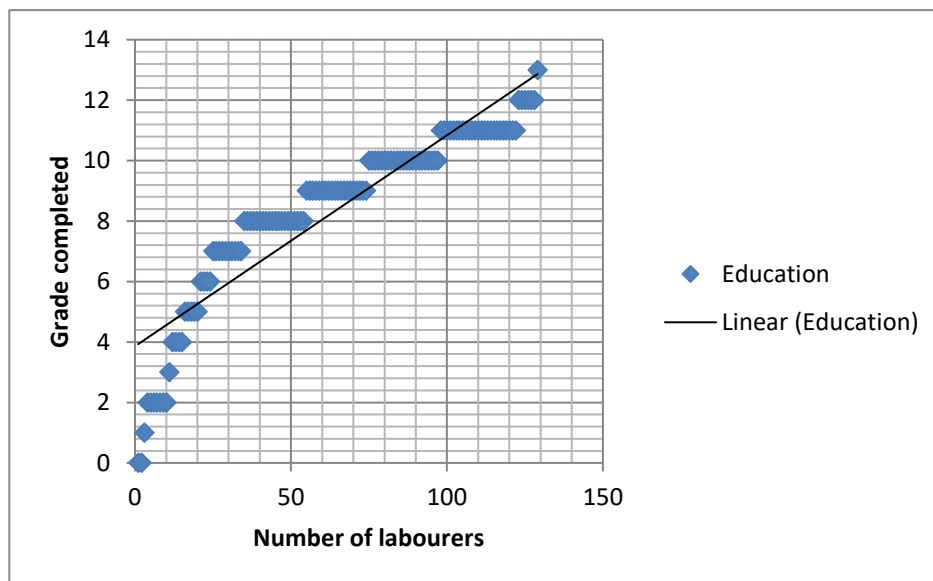
We acknowledge that the qualitative findings were not intended to be generalisable to other populations, because the study was conducted in order to provide an appropriate local context to the quantitative findings and the research sample comprised only 18 participants. The possible adverse effects of terminated interviews were minimal. All interviews with the participants were transcribed and audio-taped, and by the end of each interview we were able to establish that the point of saturation had been reached. The next section describes the overall demographic characteristics of day labourers in East London as it was forthcoming from the first (quantitative) phase of the project.

Results from Phase 1 (Quantitative) of the Study

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants in Phase 1 of the Study (Sample of 131)

Although women formed part of the inclusion criteria, the sample comprised only African males. The home language of almost all the participants (98%) was isiXhosa. Almost all the South African-born participants (98%) originated from the Eastern Cape. The average age of the day labourers in the research sample was 40 years, with 74 per cent never married or single, 14 per cent married, and 5 per cent living with a partner.

Figure 2 illustrates the relatively low levels of educational attainment among the 131 participants, which inevitably makes the likelihood of finding employment in the formal sector remote in an economy that is characterised by high rates of unemployment. Of the 131 participants who were surveyed, 65 per cent reported that they had been in full-time employment before they became day labourers.



phase of the study earned an average of R27.65 per hour when they were able to find employment, with the lowest hourly wage amounting to R10.53 and the highest to R140.00. The findings revealed that the participants stood for an average of six days per week at street corners and roadsides and that the median was seven days.

The participants had earned a daily average of R116.37 during the previous 12 months, with a median value of R100.00, a minimum value of R20.00, and a maximum value of R500.00. These figures can be compared with the lowest wage for which they were willing to work, for which the median value was R150.00. Although the lowest daily wage for which they were prepared to work was R100.00 and less than they expected to earn, they were nonetheless willing to work for the lower amount owing to the scarcity of work at hiring sites. The demographic information from the quantitative phase of the study forms the precursor to interpret the findings of phase 2, which qualitatively focuses on the hardship and resilience of day labourers in East London. The infrequent income provides the background against which the findings and themes relating to day labourers' hardships identified in the qualitative phase of the research must be interpreted.

Findings and Themes from Phase 2 (Qualitative) of the Study

In this section the main hardship or challenges as experienced by the day labourers will be discussed and links will be made to the implications for DSW.

Dislocated Family Life of Day Labourers

South Africa has a history of dislocated families due to forced migration between homelands and white-owned communities during the apartheid era (Dubbeld 2013; Hall and Posel 2019). In the post-apartheid era, it was expected that this migration pattern will decrease, but the opposite happened owing to the worsening economic situations and increasing unemployment. According to Posel (2020), in 2014 – 15, 16 per cent of South African families had a family migrating for work between rural and urban settings. Another pattern that became evident in the post-apartheid era is the decrease of marriage in the black rural and urban communities. Dubbeld (2013) as well as Hall and Posel (2019) highlighted that cohabitation is taking place but marriages decline partially due to the unaffordability to pay the lobola as well as the empowerment and independence of the women who receive the child support grant. In order to augment or enhance the income of the families, the poor rural families send their young active males, mostly the eldest son, to the cities to find work and an income (Dubbeld 2013; Hall and Posel 2019; Mhlongo 2019). The day labourers in South Africa are an example of the men whom the families send to look for work to support them. In this study, the average age of the 131 day labourers in the research sample was 40 years, with 74 per cent never married or single, 14 per cent married, and 5 per cent living with a partner. The results here are similar to what was found in studies by Mohlabane, Gumede and Mokomane (2019) and Malinga (2015).

In this study, the average number of dependants that each participant supported from the wages that he earned as a day labourer, excluding himself, was three. In East London, 67 per cent of the participants reported that they lived with their families, while a significant portion (33%) revealed that they did not live with their immediate families and dependants. Their families reside in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. To make the situation even worse, the day labourer, with his low and irregular income is not always able to support and visit the family regularly either as he cannot afford to go home or he cannot return home without having money to offer them:

It is hard to stay without your family because they always think that I am earning a lot of money when I am here in this East London area. If I was staying with them, they would see that I cannot send money home because I am getting cents. They can only get money from me in December.

You see, bhuti, for me it is difficult to send money home, because I earn peanuts.

It is difficult for me to go home so that I can be happy like other people and see my children. It is expensive to take a taxi from here to my home. I wait for December and then I know by then many people go home.

Malinga (2015) and Dubbeld (2013) explain that the cultural stereotype of men as providers is so deeply entrenched that for many day labourers it would be preferable to sleep under bridges or never return than to return empty handed to their homes after being unable to find work.

Taylor (2018) and the DSD (2016) view South Africa's growth in social protection (the grants) as the greatest success and expenditure of our post-apartheid development social welfare system with currently over 17 million recipients for the caregivers of children (mostly women), older people and people with physical disabilities. Dubbeld (2013, 21) is of the opinion that the current grant system divides poorer black people into "deserving and undeserving in a manner that belies the constitutional imperatives towards justice that are supposed to shape post-apartheid policy". Within a context where waged work is as scarce, the effect of the grant policy has been to the disadvantage of those structurally unable to find waged work and the current social grant system has produced a new kind of uneven geography. It is dividing villages and pushing those who do not qualify for grants out (Dubbeld 2013).

Du Toit and Neves (2009) highlighted the value of the current grant system in many ways, but they are also aware of the new injustices it creates. To truly combat poverty is to look at the root causes and the structural injustices (Du Toit and Neves 2009, Schenck, Blaauw, and Matthee 2020) and this is where DSW has to play a more active role. Is the current welfare system dealing with the root injustices and causes of poverty? Are we critical towards the current social protection system? Are we just the implementers of Government political agendas? Are we questioning what social protection system can benefit the informal workers?

Hardships Experienced at Hiring Sites

In order to find work, day labourers are standing at street corners or in front of hardware shops waiting to be picked up by a possible employer. In this study, it was revealed how exposed they are to violations from the public, the police, the shop owners and the employers. The day labourers are dependent on all these groups of people and the unequal power relationships are evident. Heap, Barnes and Weller (2018) confirmed that the informal worker and female informal workers even more so, do not have social protection, a voice and agency to claim space in the city. They shared the difficulties with those they interact with. Some of the participants reported that they were often subjected to verbal abuse by motorists who drove past the hiring sites or parked nearby:

Some motorists who come and park their cars near the shops where we stand, they always swear at us, saying that we should not try to do anything close to their cars or they will get cross with us.

The participants further explained that some of the motorists accused them of stealing items from their cars to sell cheaply to their friends:

There are some motorists around parking sites, they fight with us concerning their cars ... they try to hit us with their cars and they will never even say sorry ... instead they will say 'Go away!' Some of them think we are robbers.

While doing the research, it was evident that the owners and managers of local businesses in close vicinity where the day labourers stand, regarded the presence of these day labourers as problematic. Several of the participants reported that they had been subjected to verbal abuse and accused by owners or managers as being thieves who posed as people who were in search of employment as a legitimate pretext for loitering at or near their premises.

We stand outside CTM fence because the manager does not want us inside the store yard. He always says that we are here to threaten his customers, we are not here because we came to look for work ... not only him, even people passing in the street assume that we are robbers and run away from us.

In addition, harassment is also experienced by the police and metro police. Although some of the day labourers indicated that the police and metro police treat them well, some of the participants revealed that police officials who conducted patrols in East London frequently harassed day labourers by demanding to search them for possession of substances such as *dagga* (marijuana)¹. The participants reported that being searched by the police often compromised their opportunities for finding

1 The study was done before the decriminalisation of *dagga*. At the time of the study it was an illegal substance.

employment, because the police demanded their attention, harassed them, and threatened to take them to local police stations:

We have a problem with some of the policemen here. They usually come to disrupt us when we are waiting for employment here. When they come, they search us, thinking that they will find 'intsangu' [dagga]. We do not carry that when we are here to work, not for doing wrong things. They must get that into their heads.

The worst violations experienced by the day labourers are from some exploitative employers. Wage theft, according to Theodore and Requa-Trautz (2018), is a common problem among day labourers in Los Angeles and so it is in East London. Wage negotiations are usually hastily done at the hiring site, which makes it possible for employers to change the conditions of payment. The day labourers are clearly in a powerless position where the employer can determine how much and if he/she is willing to pay. The findings revealed several instances of employers having reneged agreements to pay specified sums of money for work and having offered food instead.

These people treat us badly. They do not give us money, they give us food ... but I work long hours for them, how can they pay me with food? I want money. Yesterday I worked doing painting in Beacon Bay and my pay was supposed to be R180, because we agreed, but he decided to give me food ... I was angry and I did not take their food because I wanted my money.

It also emerged that in some instances employers employed the day labourers for extended periods, in some instances even months, without paying them.

I worked in Butterworth for a period of one month ... I worked for a guy who got a tender to do plumbing in some of the schools there ... I worked, I think, for a month, but when the month ended, I was not paid ... he kept on telling me that the money was not in ... when it is in he will contact me ... he took my number. Till today I waited ...

Several participants complained that they had been paid less than had been agreed upon in their negotiations with their employers. As one participant explained:

The people that we work for, they do not want to pay enough money ... they always give us less money ... if when I start working we agreed that he will give me R100, he will give me the half of that ... when I refuse to take the half price, they will undermine me, saying that I am nothing and where will I get the R50? They helped me, I had nothing ... yo, you do not know.

Another form of abuse that the participants reported was being abandoned at worksites. In these instances, the day labourers had been taken to worksites and left, unsupervised, to complete the tasks that had been assigned to them. In the account from which the excerpt that follows was extracted, the employer did not return after the participant had completed the task and instead sent someone else to evict him from the site:

Yesterday I worked and it was late in Gonubie ... the guy promised to bring me back because it was late already, we agreed on that ... I went there with him in a car ... I said the price for the day will be R350. He said 'yes' he gave me the material to do it ... when I was done someone else came to me to say I must leave ... when I asked where is the guy who brought me here ... he said 'I don't know. All I know is that you must leave ... I was alone there and it was far from home because I stay in Ziphunzane ... I did not know what to do, I came back alone and the cars on the road would not stop because it was late.

Adding to the experiences with wage theft, day labourers are also requested to work long hours. According to Alferts et al. (2016), extended working hours and hard and hazardous work can have severe adverse effects on both physical and mental health. Almost all of the interviewees claimed that employers often failed to adhere to the number of hours for which they had agreed to work. They maintained that employers often required them to work for long hours, without increasing the amounts that they had agreed to pay them.

We work long hours, but we get peanuts after we have done the work.

Some of the participants complained that certain African employers did not permit them to have breaks in long working days.

You see here you work and work very hard till sunset sometimes, but you will never have a chance to eat because of the cruelty of these (African) guys who come and take us here.

Several researchers have pointed out that as day labourers work outside of the scope of formal labour laws and regulations, they are often exposed to hazardous working conditions and an abnormally high risk of sustaining work-related injuries (Losby et al. 2002; Valenzuela 2000). One of the participants confirmed:

Our work is hard and dangerous, but we have no choice but to force ourselves and work hard, because we want money.

Some of the participants expressed particular aversion towards Chinese and Ghanaian employers, claiming that they were often not treated fairly by them.

Ghana guys are small boys, but they are cruel, they have no heart for a person. I do not want to work for them anymore.

Valenzuela (2000) also emphasised the duration without breaks for which day labourers were often expected to work in the US. According to Theodore and Requa-Trautz (2018), the major obstacle to the reduction of wage theft and the effective recovery of unpaid wages is the lack of redress mechanisms. Either there is no system in place or they do not have the knowledge about the possibilities in terms of remedies. Several of the participants confirmed that some employers abuse informal

workers as they believe that day labourers could not report their grievances to the police because the police would not listen to them:

When we go to the police to report that employers have cheated us, they will tell us to go to the CCMA², but we do not know where the CCMA is.

Consequently, although day labourers do sometimes report crimes that are committed against them to the police, the cases are often not investigated. Conversely, if they are referred to labour representatives, in many cases it is unlikely that their complaints will receive attention, owing to the informal nature of day labouring and the difficulty that is usually entailed in endeavouring to locate the employers concerned. Although the South African Government, NGOs and civil society are increasingly acknowledging the fact that the informal workers are here to stay and they should be embraced, very little is in place to support their informal functioning, as will be illustrated in the next section.

Dealing with Health and Infrastructural Problems

Many studies conducted by Blaauw and colleagues (Blaauw, Louw, and Schenck 2006; Blaauw et al. 2007; Schenck, Blaauw, and Matthee 2020) refer to the lack of proper infrastructure for day labourers. In cities such as Los Angeles, worker centres for the day labourers provide shade and ablution facilities for the day labourers. The lack of access to shade and facilities such as toilets and water was highlighted by the participants in East London:

You can imagine we struggle even to get water here. We ask around in order to get water. There are no taps.

All of us, we go to the bush. There are no toilets for us here. It's really a struggle.

Some mentioned that public facilities such as garages are used, if available and accessible. A simple act of dignifying their circumstances and providing some protection against harsh weather can be considered and negotiated on behalf of or with the day labourers. Several of the participants in this study explained that day labourers who suffer from health problems were particularly adversely affected by waiting at the hiring sites for employment when weather conditions were extreme.

Some of us here are epileptic. When it is too hot, they can't stand the hot temperature. It is difficult for them.

2 The Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) is the South African statutory body that arbitrates labour disputes and mitigates damages caused by unfair dismissal either by awarding compensation or by calling for reinstatement of the employee.

It was further observed that none of the hiring sites the day labourers had access to has any form of man-made protection to provide shade for them. There might be trees at some of the sites, but no formal structures were available to protect against rain, sun and cold weather.

In addition to not having basic infrastructure as protection, some participants further reported that they struggle to access healthcare facilities if they fell ill while they stood at hiring sites as it may cost them an income for the day.

We get sick sometimes here because of the extreme weather conditions, but the clinics are too far for us to see the nurse.

This finding is indicative of the harsh reality that day labourers effectively have limited access to healthcare services. In many instances, they cannot afford to spend a day at a clinic to receive treatment, as doing so would necessitate forfeiting opportunities for employment. DSW and other services need to start thinking differently about service delivery and questions should be asked about services relevant for informal workers and accessibility to services in general.

Tensions between Groups of Day Labourers at Hiring Sites

According to Krosch, Tyler and Amodio (2017), tension increases between different racial groups when there is a perceived scarcity of resources. Mapendere, Schenck and Blaauw (2019) found this racial tension in Cape Town between foreign and local day labourers. A unique finding of this study was that groups of South African day labourers also tended to be in conflict with one another. It was found that they tended to identify themselves as groups according to criteria such as shared clan names, age groups, kinship ties, and places of birth. This regionally based “racial” phenomenon was attributed to the preponderance of day labourers from the Eastern Cape in the research sample and concluded that they would be acutely aware of the significance of clan names in their home province. One participant explained that they look after each other when from the same clan:

Uhlubi wam [a clan name], I try by all means to find work for him and we stay together always, no matter what.

Another participant explained that some groups used derogatory terms to refer to others and flattering ones to refer to themselves:

That group that you see there, bra, we do not work closely with them. They call us ‘olwatha’. Every time when we came across them, they will say ‘olwatha ndini’ (olwatha are despicable) and they think that they are the masters of this place, as they say they are more clever than us.

In the words of a self-styled member of the *izikhokho*:

We are 'izikhokho' here. We do wonders when it comes to work. All the Ghana guys (employers from Ghana) and also some of our people, when they come here, they look for us, because when we do the job, we nail it and we are trusted.

The International Federation for Social Workers (2020) emphasises that social workers have a major role to play in facilitating social cohesion in communities by offering empowerment and protection to individuals and the community through a rights-based approach. Fair delivery of services, a positive presence in the community and seeing that structural injustices are dealt with should be at the heart of DSW.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Lombard (2019) is of the opinion that DSW should deal with psycho-social support, personal action or agency and structural injustices. To provide psycho-social support is what social work is mostly comfortable with and less so dealing with structural injustices (Gray 2006). The hardships that the findings revealed suggest that, at present, day labourers are obliged to work under conditions in which even their basic human rights cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, failure to take decisive steps to ensure that their rights are upheld amounts to turning a blind eye to the gross exploitation of one segment of society by another, thereby aiding and abetting the perpetuation of equally gross socio-economic inequalities and the further marginalisation of this grouping of the informal economy.

The sphere where the social work profession can add the most value in this regard is with the promotion of advocacy among this marginalised and vulnerable group. Advocacy, as it is defined in social work practice, provides the most meaningful basis for social interventions at the micro level. The principle of advocacy in social work distinguishes the profession from all other helping professions. Interventions that stem from advocacy emphasise the need for the voices of vulnerable and marginalised communities concerning matters that have significant implications for their lives to be heard and for their fundamental human rights to be defended and safeguarded.

The question is now: What should social workers advocate for? Currently, the system for the informal workers is dehumanising, exclusionary and marginalising. It needs to move towards an inclusive, appreciative and participatory approach (Schenck 2019):

- Instead of sitting in offices and clinics, social service practitioners (we do understand that social workers are often overwhelmed with caseloads – in many cases with little or no resources), health workers and all government and NGO services should become mobile and reach out to communities instead of waiting for poor and vulnerable people to come to the service; they simply cannot afford it. Social workers need to be resourced to be able to reach out to the informal workers such as day labourers.

- Government and civil society should recognise the value of the informal workers and that they will not disappear. Include or make them visible in policies and practices. Get geared to deliver outreach services, flexible services as well as humane and respectful services (in the spirit of Batho Pele).
- Facilitative policy environments for NGOs and civil society should be created.
- In particular, social workers should advocate with local government to become supportive to informal workers with basic access to water, shade and sanitation facilities for the dignity, health and well-being of the informal workers and the communities where they stand.

It is important to recognise that day labourers contribute their blood and sweat to the South African economy with little or no reward or recognition. Policy at all levels must urgently start to reflect this and even trade unions may want to broaden their scope and enrol these men into their sphere of influence. To practise DSW implies critical reflection, liberation of our minds, unveiling injustices, and enhancing empowerment and freedoms, respect and inclusivity. In pursuing this as a goal, the profession can be more effective to improve the lives of those who do “... not have anything else, bra”.

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